

Sunday Night Message

May 13, 2018

Joshua 22

Series – *Joshua*

Text – Joshua 22

Review

In chapter 14, we saw the general division of the Land of Israel, noting the two and one half tribes located on the eastern side of the Jordan River, and then the nine tribes plus two half tribes located on the western side of the river, with the half tribe of Manasseh receiving portions of land on both sides. Also, the Levites were dispersed throughout the Land on both sides in 48 cities, but receiving no specific land inheritance.

In chapter 15, we saw the land distribution of the tribe of Judah. (See Map) Judah was the largest of all of the tribes according to the census taken in Numbers 26. The numbers given there are for the men, twenty years of age and older who could go to war.

"These are the families of Judah according to those that were numbered of them, threescore and sixteen thousand and five hundred." (Numbers 26:22)

In chapters 16 and 17, we saw the land distribution for Manasseh and Ephraim, the two half-tribes within the Tribe of Joseph.

In chapter 18 & 19, we saw the land distribution for the remaining tribes, along with a special gift of land for Joshua.

In chapter 20, we studied the six Levitical cities of refuge.

In chapter 21, we saw the distribution of the remaining Levitical cities. There were forty-eight cities that were to be given to the Levites from the inheritance of the other tribes of Israel. We also saw that God fulfilled His promise to Israel. He drove out the inhabitants, and He gave Israel their land.

Introduction

Here in chapter twenty-two, Joshua is sending back the two and one half tribes that received their inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan River (see map). They have finished helping their brethren in driving out the inhabitants on the western side of the river and now they could return to their homes and families.

However, a disagreement between the eastern tribes and the western tribes quickly takes place after they return to their side of the Jordan River, which was caused by a misunderstanding of the facts and a misjudging of motives. Often times we get into disagreements with people because we don't understand all of the facts, or because we misjudge their motives. We will see how Israel deals with this first major conflict that literally brings them to the very brink of Civil War.

I An Honorable Discharge from Unwavering Armed Service (vs. 1 – 9)

A He Praises Them (vs. 1 – 4)

For their obedience to the commandment of Moses and Joshua, and for their faithfulness to the other tribes and to the Lord.

See Numbers 32: 1 – 27, and Joshua 1:2 – 18 for Moses commandment regarding the request of the two and a half tribes on the other side of the Jordan River.

B He Preaches to Them (v. 5)

Joshua admonishes them to continue serving the Lord and following the Law of Moses. This is the same exhortation given to the rest of the congregation:

"Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;" (Deuteronomy 4:5-9)

"And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13)

C He Provides for Them (vs. 6 – 9)

When they conquered the land on the west side of the Jordan River, they took of the spoils of the land, which were technically for the tribes who would live in that part of Israel, but Joshua made sure that the tribes on the east shared equally with the tribes on the west as a way of thanking them for their help.

II An Honest Disagreement over an Unnecessary Altar (vs. 10 – 34)

A An Altar is Built on the Border (vs. 10 – 12)

The problem starts when the three tribes on the east build an altar on the border. At this point, we don't understand why they built it, and exactly what they were going to do with it; we just know that they built it. We also know that their brethren on the west are very upset about it, and are ready to go war over it. By the way, at this point, the tribes on the west do not know why they did it

or what they were going to do with it. However, they had their suspicions, and they thought the worst.

Illustration – I am often guilty of thinking the worst about people. Unfortunately, I am often right. I suppose it is OK to have suspicions, but judgment cannot be made until all of the facts are in.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged." (Matthew 7:1)

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John 7:24)

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Corinthians 4:5)

This does not mean that we are never to judge; it just means that if we are in a position to judge something, we must be sure to have all of the facts. However, most of the time, we are not in a position to make a judgment.

B An Envoy is Sent (vs. 13 – 20)

The western tribes do the right thing. They send a group of men to investigate exactly what is going on. They determine to get all of the facts before they do something as rash as going to war against their brothers. The embassy includes Phineas the high priest as well as a representative or prince from each of the nine and half tribes on the west side of the Jordan.

However, notice beginning in v. 16 that they are convinced that the three tribes on the east are up to no good. (*"that ye may rebel this day against the Lord"*)

They then compare the sin that they think the eastern tribes are committing to the sin of "Peor" and the sin of "Achan". They are not saying that their sin is the same, but they are saying, it is as serious.

The sin of Peor involved Balaam who could not curse the children of Israel, but he did advise Balak to infiltrate the Israelites by sending women in who become a stumblingblock to them. (Numbers 22 – 24; 31)

The sin of Achan was the taking of the "accursed thing", which was goodly Babylonish garment. (Joshua 7)

Apparently, they thought the eastern tribes were going to use the altar at the border as a place of sacrifice, which would be in competition with the Tabernacle in Shiloh. This was exactly the same thing that Jeroboam would do later on when he split the northern tribes from the tribe of Judah. He set up two altars: one at Bethel, and one at Dan. This was to keep the people from the north from traveling down to Judah to worship at the Temple. (1 Kings 12:25 – 33)

C An Explanation is Given (vs. 21 – 29)

We find out here that the intention of the eastern tribes was not set up an altar for sacrifice, but as a memorial and as a witness (Hebrew - *Ed*) between them and the western tribes. They were distrustful of the western tribes, which they had no reason for. They thought that the western tribes might one day not want them to be part of the worship at Shiloh. So, the altar was set up as kind of a warning to the west.

D An Agreement is Achieved (vs. 30 – 34)

Once everyone understands what is really happening, and what the motivation really was, they are OK with it.

Conclusion

The whole problem was because of a misunderstanding. The eastern tribes thought the western tribes were someday going to forbid them from coming to Shiloh. The western tribes thought the eastern tribes were trying to separate from them. They jumped to conclusions, and they judged motives. They thought the worse. We do the same thing today and we shouldn't.

